



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk 860-441-6640  
Town Manager  
860-441-6630

## Meeting Minutes

### Representative Town Meeting

**Moderator Kevin Power, Representatives Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Michael Collins, Nancy M. Congdon, Warren T. Cooper, Luanne E. DeMatto, Syma Ebbin, Peter Fairbank, Nancy E. Gilly, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Keith L. Hedrick, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Elizabeth Luck, Jackie Massett, Carole McCarthy, Roscoe Merritt, Constance Miller, Karen F. Morton, Scott Newsome, Dana C. Parfitt, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Tim Plungis, Kristen L. Powers, Don Pratt, Betty A. Prochaska, John F. Scott IV, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, and Robert A. Warn**

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Wednesday, April 13, 2011

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

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#### Regular Meeting

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#### A. ROLL CALL

*Moderator Kevin Power called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.*

*35 members were present, and a quorum was declared.*

*The Moderator reported that Reps. Fairbank, Johnson and Pratt called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.*

Members Present: Moderator Power, Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Collins, Rep. Congdon, Rep. Cooper, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Gilly, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Miller, Rep. Morton, Rep. Parfitt, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Plungis, Rep. Powers, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Scott, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swindell and Rep. Warn  
Members Absent: Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Newsome and Rep. Pratt

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs.*

#### B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

*The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag.*

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 9, 2011

*A motion that the minutes be approved was made by Rep. Scott, seconded by Rep. Pasqualini.*

*The vote on approval of the minutes carried 33 in favor, 2 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Hubbard, McCarthy)*

#### D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

*Andrew Parrella, 790 Eastern Point Road, quoted figures from several articles published on patch.com. He cited the potential loss to the Town of \$18.4 million in State aid and read salary figures for the highest-paid school and Town employees. He noted that he is disturbed that budget proposals do not include any reductions in the highest salaries. Mr. Parrella urged members to keep these items in mind when voting on the budget.*

#### E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

*Moderator Power reminded the members that the annual budget meeting will begin on April 28 at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center.*

#### F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

*Mr. Oefinger noted that both the Town Manager's News and the new issue of the Human Services newsletter, have been made available to all members.*

##### 1. Financial report

*The Manager reported that the Fund Balance as of March 31, 2011 is approximately \$8.7 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000, but will be reduced to approximately \$112,000 with the passage of fourth-quarter transfers; the Capital Reserve balance is approximately \$321,000.*

## **2. Monthly briefing**

*Mr. Oefinger touched on a number of items included in the Town Manager's News, including several upcoming small business workshops; a large donation to Human Services by Stop & Shop; new FEMA maps; the grand re-opening of Survival Systems Training; and the Arbor Day celebration scheduled for April 29.*

*He reported that the State has decided that a special primary will be held in June for the office of Probate Judge, followed by a special election in August. A fourth-quarter transfer will be necessary to finance the June primary, and the proposed FY2012 budget does not include funds for the August election. The Town Council is drafting a letter to the State requesting that the election be delayed until November.*

*The Town Manager addressed the issue of proposed cuts in State aid to municipalities, specifically the proposed cut of \$18 million to the Town of Groton. He suggested that such cuts may or may not occur, and that these figures may be simply one scenario in the process of moving forward toward a final budget.*

## **G. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

*Superintendent Paul Kadri described the accreditation process that was just completed at Fitch High School, noting that the school earned high praise from the review team. He thanked RTM members for their participation in the recent presentation regarding new technology in the schools. Mr. Kadri reported that he attended the annual military breakfast and described the program whose goal is to improve the school experience of students from military families. He made members aware of a State proposal to change the birth date requirement for Kindergarten admission, adding that the proposal includes a requirement for Town-funded pre-K programs.*

*Rep. Warn stated that he spoke to a constituent who had recently registered his child for Kindergarten and who was impressed by the presentation made by school staff, but troubled that he was subjected to a lengthy advertisement for Phase II.*

*Mr. Kadri described the presentation referred to by the citizen and assured the RTM that both the length and content of the presentation were appropriate.*

## **H. LIAISON REPORTS**

*None.*

## **I. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **1. FINANCE - Chairman Hedrick**

*No meeting, no report.*

### **2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES - Chairman Pratt**

*No meeting, no report.*

### **3. EDUCATION - Chairman Swindell**

*No meeting, no report.*

### **4. RECREATION - Chairman Warn**

*No meeting, no report.*

### **5. PUBLIC SAFETY - Chairman Parfitt**

*No meeting, no report.*

### **6. PUBLIC WORKS - Chairman Collins**

*No meeting, no report.*

**7. RULES & PROCEDURES - Chairman Scott**

*No meeting, no report.*

**J. OTHER BUSINESS**

*Republican Floor Leader Jackie Massett requested a recess for a caucus at 8:00 p.m. The meeting re-convened at 8:22 p.m.*

**Orientation to the FYE2012 Budget**

*Moderator Power briefly reviewed the budget process and the conduct of budget sessions, adding that a tally of the voted figures will be kept on a white board at the front of the room.*

**2010-0181 FYE2012 Budget Discussion**

**FYE2012 BUDGET DISCUSSION**

**Discussed**

*Rep. Sebastian stated that he would like to make a motion that the RTM declare a zero tax increase as the goal of its budget deliberations. He would also like income figures to be posted along with the tally of voted expense figures during budget sessions.*

*Rep. Scott raised a Point of Order that Rep. Sebastian's motion violates RTM Rule 6.5.1, since the matter did not come from committee and was not introduced under suspension of the rules. The Town Clerk clarified that Rule 6.5.1 applies only to matters that would normally go to committee.*

*The Point of Order was overruled by the Moderator.*

*Moderator Power suggested that the RTM is welcome to make a zero tax increase an objective, but added that it cannot be a motion, since the body must vote on individual accounts.*

*Rep. Sebastian reiterated that he would like income numbers to be posted along with the voted figures and added that he is uncomfortable voting on expenditures without having numbers for income.*

*Mr. Oefinger confirmed Rep. Granatosky's reminder to the members that the final State budget figures are never available by the time the Town Charter requires the RTM to vote on the budget. He added that the Town uses the Governor's proposed budget to make its assumptions about revenues and that the RTM is always updated about changes. In addition, revenues are reviewed prior to the Town Council's setting of the final mill rate.*

*Rep. Ebbin stated that while she appreciates the goal of a zero tax increase, there are other objectives that the RTM must take into account such as good schools, roads and other services. She suggested that the Town must focus on attracting businesses to Groton, and that good services are essential to this goal.*

*Rep. Swindell agrees on the need to focus on income. He suggested that a five percent reduction can be achieved by asking for employee givebacks and by cutting operational expenses.*

*Moderator Power replied that this goal can be achieved item by item, but cautioned that department heads make the final decision about how the appropriated funds are spent.*

*Mr. Oefinger informed the members that no salary increases have been budgeted for FY2012 with the exception of a few members of AFSCME whose contract was just renegotiated. All other contracts are due to be renegotiated this year.*

*Rep. Sebastian cautioned that EB and Pfizer may not stay in Groton forever, especially if taxes are out of control.*

*Rep. Kotowski asked why the various budget scenarios presented to the Town Manager by department heads are not available to the RTM for review.*

*Town Manager Oefinger replied that although he asked department heads to submit three budget scenarios, two alternative budgets do not exist. Lists of ideas and suggestions for budget reductions were submitted, but there is no way of presenting these in the budget. The Manager noted that he does have memos and emails regarding these suggestions.*

*Rep. Plungis feels strongly that the practice of making longevity payments to employees should be stopped.*

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m. was made by Rep. Barnhart, seconded by Rep. Luck and so voted unanimously.*

*Attest:*

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk  
Clerk of the RTM*

*Janet L. Downs, Deputy Town Clerk*